

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 116084 TOSEC 010015

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 116084 TOSEC 010015

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE, INFO AMMAN, BEIRUT, CAIRO,
TEL AVIV, USUN, MAY 19, FROM DAMASCUS RPTD TO YOU:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1833

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

DEPARTMENT PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, EG

SUBJECT: SADAT'S VISIT TO DAMASCUS

1. SADAT ARRIVED DAMASCUS SATURDAY EVENING, MAY 17,
ON BRIEF 18-HOUR VISIT TO SYRIA. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED
BY FONMIN FAHMI AND EGYPTIAN HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION
MINISTER UTHMAN. TIGHT SECURITY WAS EVIDENT AT
DAMASCUS AIRPORT BOTH FOR EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT'S ARRIVAL
AND DEPARTURE. THERE WERE SEVERAL SCUFFLES BETWEEN
PRESS PHOTOGRAPHERS, WHO NORMALLY DOCILE HERE, AND SYRIAN
SECURITY OFFICERS AS PHOTOGRAPHERS JUMPED ROPED OFF AREA AND
SOUGHT BEST POSITIONS TO PHOTOGRAPH THE TWO PRESIDENTS.

2. DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES IN ABSENCE OF HARD NEWS TO DATE ON COURSE
OF VISIT WERE GENERALLY STRUCK BY LACK OF CEREMONIAL
SURROUNDING SADAT'S BRIEF STOPOVER. THERE WAS NO
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 116084 TOSEC 010015

OFFICIAL DINNER AND NO ATTEMPT TO ORGANIZE WELCOMING
DEMONSTRATION OR EVEN DISTRIBUTE PHOTOGRAPHS OF
SADAT TO THOSE FEW SYRIANS ON
STREETS TO WITNESS HIS ARRIVAL.

3. NEVERTHELESS, THE PRESS STATEMENT MADE BY SADAT DURING EVENING AFTER HIS FIRST OF TWO MEETINGS WITH ASAD BETRAYED NO FRICTION. HIS SUBSEQUENT PRESS CONFERENCE AT NOON THE FOLLOWING DAY ALSO GAVE NO HINT OF ANY STRAIN IN THE SYRO-EGYPTIAN DIALOGUE. SYRIAN TELEVISION PICTURED A BEAMING ASAD LOCKED IN WARM EMBRACE WITH SADAT AT THEIR LEAVE TAKING.

4. AT HIS MAY 18 PRESS CONFERENCE SADAT HAD A SMILING ARAFAT SEATED BESIDE HIM, AS IF TO SYMBOLIZE THE GOOD TIES BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE PLO. THIS CONFERENCE FOLLOWED AN HOUR'S PRIVATE MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO.

5. WE FOUND SADAT'S FOLLOWING ANSWERS TO PRESS QUERIES OF APRTICULAR INTEREST.

A. EUPHRATES WATER DISPUTE: ASKED WHETHER OR NOT HE HAD BEEN REQUESTED TO TRY TO MEDIATE THE PROBLEM BETWEEN BAGHDAD AND DAMASCUS, SADAT ANSWERED GINGERLY THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED MATTER IN BOTH CAPITALS BUT ONE "MUST BE VERY CAREFUL" WITH REGARD TO IT. HE AFFIRMED THAT "THESE PROBLEMS WILL BE SOLVED9"

B. UNDOF RENEWAL: "WE DID NOT DISCUSS THIS QUESTION."

C. SADAT AFFIRMED HE WOULD SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE MAJORITY OF ARAB LEADERS IN MEETING WITH PRESIDENT FORD IN SALZBURG. HE EXPECTED TO HEAR PRESIDENT FORD'S VIEWS AND LEARN RESULT OF HIS RECENT POLICY REASSESSMENT.

D. SADAT SAID PALESTINIANS HAD THE RIGHT TO REJECT UN RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 AND TO DECIDE WHETHER THEY WOULD GO TO GENEVA. "BUT IT SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD THAT IF THEY AGREE TO GO TO GENEVA, THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IS A POLITICAL AND NOT A HUMANITRAIAN ONE, CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 116084 TOSEC 010015

AS IT HAS BEEN TACKLED IN THE PAST."

E. SADAT EXPRESSED HOPE THAT IMMEDIATELY AFTER SALZBURG A CONFERENCE OF THE CONFRONTATION "STATES", WHICH HE SPECIFIED AS SYRIA, EGYPT, JORDAN AND THE PLO, WOULD BE HELD. MURPHY UNQUOTE. INGERSOLL

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